Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature

Charles Hatfield
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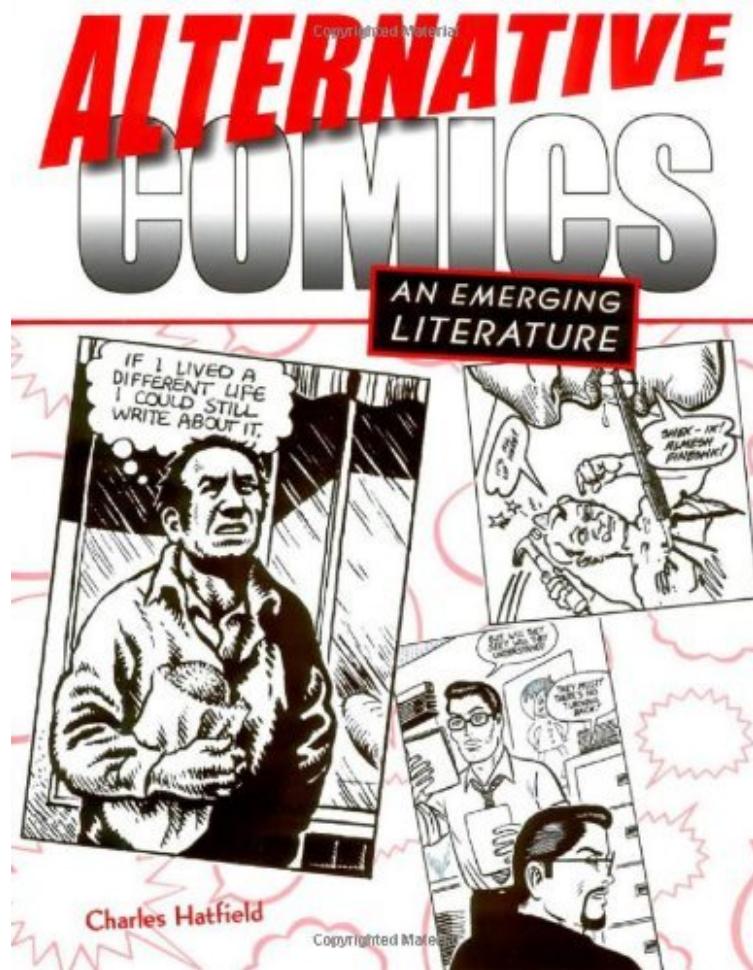
Charles Hatfield : Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. There Are Better Alternatives To This BookBy thirdtwinToo narrow in scope and shallow in coverage- even the title is deceptive- there have always been 'alternative' even 'underground comics from the very beginning of the medium- with it's pinnacle as far as variety and availability reached in the 1960's. Is there anyone interested in the medium who hasn't heard of R Crumb by now or the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers for example? I guess it's all in how one defines 'alternative'? The point is, it's not an emerging literature it was always there since the early pulp books/magazines and maybe before that. More archival and contextual research is needed.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The origin of what we came to call the Direct ...By BLBComicsThe origin of what we came to call the Direct Market is when Print Mint took Zap Comics national back in 1968.10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful BookBy Ian GordonHatfield has written a very good account of the formal qualities of the comic art form. He deals with the interaction between visual and

textual elements in comics at a theoretical level not previously broached. His work shows how these qualities play out in comics creating narratives and meaning for their readers. Having delineated these qualities he then sets about a formal reading of specific works in chapters 3 to 5. In these chapters he addresses both the cultural context of alternative comics and their formal aspects. His central argument is that comics need to be reconsidered in socio-historical and aesthetic terms. While acknowledging comics lowbrow origins he points to the emergence of alternative comics and shows that they offer new ways of understanding fiction and readers' engagement in constructing meaning.Given that Hatfield is arguing for a greater complexity to the comic art form than is popularly ascribed, and that this requires an interpretative language and theory, his work is direct. Theory of this sort often drifts into abstract language and complex abstractions. Hatfield avoids this pitfall grounding his work in description of comics. Hatfield also addresses broader issues than the simple formal aspects of these comics, or what might in other works be called their literary quality giving a broader context to his work.

In the 1980s, a sea change occurred in comics. Fueled by Art Spiegel- man and Franccedil;oise Mouly's avant-garde anthology Raw and the launch of the Love Rockets series by Gilbert, Jaime, and Mario Hernandez, the decade saw a deluge of comics that were more autobiographical, emotionally realistic, and experimental than anything seen before. These alternative comics were not the scatological satires of the 1960s underground, nor were they brightly colored newspaper strips or superhero comic books. In Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature, Charles Hatfield establishes the parameters of alternative comics by closely examining long-form comics, in particular the graphic novel. He argues that these are fundamentally a literary form and offers an extensive critical study of them both as a literary genre and as a cultural phenomenon. Combining sharp-eyed readings and illustrations from particular texts with a larger understanding of the comics as an art form, this book discusses the development of specific genres, such as autobiography and history. Alternative Comics analyzes such seminal works as Spiegelman's Maus, Gilbert Hernandez's Palomar: The Heartbreak Soup Stories, and Justin Green's Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary. Hatfield explores how issues outside of cartooning-the marketplace, production demands, work schedules-can affect the final work. Using Hernandez's Palomar as an example, he shows how serialization may determine the way a cartoonist structures a narrative. In a close look at Maus, Binky Brown, and Harvey Pekar's American Splendor, Hatfield teases out the complications of creating biography and autobiography in a substantially visual medium, and shows how creators approach these issues in radically different ways. Charles Hatfield, Canyon Country, California, is an assistant professor of English at California State University, Northridge. His work has been published in ImageTexT, Inks: Cartoon and Comic Art Studies, Children's Literature Association Quarterly, the Comics Journal, and other periodicals. See the author's Web site at www.csun.edu/~ch76854/.